

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1 and 4 and cancel claim 2, as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A process for preparing a sterile ready-to-use aqueous pharmaceutical formulation comprising a high molecular weight hyaluronic acid salt (HA) at a specified concentration, comprising the steps of :

- providing an aqueous formulation comprising high molecular weight HA at a concentration of less than the specified concentration;
- passing said aqueous formulation through a filter having a pore size less than 0.45  $\mu\text{m}$ ; and greater than 0.1  $\mu\text{m}$ ;
- concentrating said aqueous formulation by applying a vacuum and boiling off water until said specified concentration is reached; and
- after the concentration step, filling the pharmaceutical formulation directly into sterile recipients ready for pharmaceutical use, or into sterile tanks and subsequently directly into sterile recipients ready for pharmaceutical use.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently amended) Process according to claim 31, wherein the vacuum is at a pressure in the range of 30 to 60 millibars.
5. (Previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the average molecular weight of HA is in the range of 800'000 to 5'000'000 Daltons.
6. (Previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the filter has a pore size in the range of 0.22  $\mu\text{m}$  to 0.1  $\mu\text{m}$ .
7. (Previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein, during the concentration step, the concentration of HA is measured in real time and the vacuum boiling process is stopped automatically when the specified concentration is measured.
8. (Previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein the HA concentration is measured with a spectrophotometer sensing wave radiation absorption in the formulation.
9. (Previously presented) Process according to claim 1, wherein excipients are added to the formulation after the filtration step, and wherein the conductivity of the HA formulation is measured in real time until the amount of excipients reaches a required value.